

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 JUSE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1606

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4746

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, HO

SUBJECT: UNITED BRANDS PAYMENT - JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION

REF: STATE 257117

1. EMBASSY PREPARED TO APPROACH FOREIGN OFFICE PER REFTEL.  
BUT BEFORE DOING SO EMBASSY WISHES TO BRING TO DEPARTMENT'S  
ATTENTION CERTAIN CONCERNS TO WHICH PROPOSED VISIT GIVES RISE.

2. WHILE GOH PROBABLY WOULD ACQUIESCE IN VISIT AND WOULD  
AGREE TO PERMIT MR. FEFFER TO SPEAK WITH MEMBERS OF THE FORMER  
INVESTIGATORY COMMISSION, IF ONLY OUT SENSE OF RECIPROCITY FOR  
COOPERATION RECEIVED BY GOH COMMISSION IN VISIT TO US, WE  
SENSE, HOWEVER, THAT GOH WOULD HAVE LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR  
VISIT. WE BELIEVE GOH ANXIOUS TO AVOID ANYTHING WHICH  
MIGHT REFOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON STILL UNCOMPLETED LEGAL  
PROCESS AGAINST BENNATON OR GIVE FURTHER PUBLICITY TO THE  
SCANDAL AND THOSE ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED.

3. EMBASSY UNABLE TO ESTIMATE WHETHER VISIT LIKELY TO PRODUCE  
ANY FURTHER INFORMATION HELPFUL TO ITS PURPOSE. OFFICIAL REPORT  
OF THE COMMISSION WAS FORWARDED TO THE HONDURAN DESK OFFICER  
ON MAY 19, 1975. AS PREVIOUSLY STATED, EMBASSY NOT AWARE OF  
CONTENTS OF TAPES NOW IN POSSESSION OF SEC. WE WOULD  
DESIRE ANY SUCH VISIT TO BE MADE WITHOUT PUBLICITY BUT THERE  
IS NO CERTAINTY THAT SOME MEMBERS OF COMMISSION MIGHT NOT  
USE UVISIT TO FURTHER THEIR OWN POLITICAL AND OTHER INTERESTS.

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WE HAVE IN MIND IN PARTICULAR THE RECTOR, JORGE ARTURO

REINGA, WHO IS CURRENTLY CONFRONTED WITH CHAOTIC SITUATION AMONG FEUDING STUDENT FACTIONS AND WHO MIGHT WELCOME DISTRACTION WHICH REVIVAL OF BRIBERY SCANDAL MIGHT PROVIDE. ALSO ATTORNEY GENERAL SERAPIO HERNANDEZ, WHO CONTINUANCE IN OFFICE IS REPORTEDLY UNCERTAIN. EMBASSY WOULD QUESTION POLITICAL ADVISABILITY OF MR. FEFFER'S SEEKING ANY INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL LOPEZ FOR OBVIOUS REASONS. PROPRIETY OF INTERVIEW WITH BENNATON WHILE HE REMAINS UNDER INDICTMENT ALSO OPEN TO QUESTION. AS A LEGAL NICETY, THIS MAY ALSO APPLY TO ALL MEMBERS OF COMMISSION. IF EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE EXPECTED TO ACCOMPANY MR. FEFFER ON HIS INTERVIEWS, THEY COULD WELL BE PLACED IN POSITION DAMAGING TO FUTURE CONTACTS. IT WOULD ALSO BE ESSENTIAL THAT MR. FEFFER BE ABLE TO CONDUCT HIS INTERVIEWS IN SPANISH.

4. LASTLY, WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IMPACT OF VISIT ON CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN GOH AND UNITED BRANDS FOR NEW WORKING RELATIONSHIP. WHILE EMBASSY HOLDS NO BRIEF FOR ANY WRONGDOING BY THE COMPANY, WE ASSUME THESE NEGOTIATIONS ARE A MATTER OF INTEREST TO THE USG IN PROTECTING THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF US SHAREHOLDERS OF UNITED BRANDS AND, BY INEVITABLE CONNECTION, CASTLE AND COOKE. UNITED BRANDS PRESENTLY IN DISCUSSIONS WITH NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE AND BOTH COMPANIES WILL BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS NEXT WEEK WITH HONDURAN BANANA CORPORATION.

5. IF DEPARTMENT BELIEVES VISIT IS OF SUCH IMPORTANCE TO CASE AGAINST UNITED BRANDS AS TO OVERRIDE ABOVE CONCERNS, EMBASSY WILL PROCEED TO APPROACH FOREIGN OFFICE, AS INSTRUCTED. PLEASE ADVISE.  
SANCHEZ

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## Message Attributes

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